

The U.N.'s Colonial Reparations Folly

By Bruce Gilley

Later this month, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk will issue a report calling for massive reparations from the West for the alleged harms wrought by colonialism. It will be the culmination of a long-gestating effort within the U.N. and by Third World nations to squeeze



money and demand other goodies from former colonial powers in the name of “reparatory justice.”

In addition to being historically ill-informed, the effort is racist. What began as a simple extortion effort has since been supercharged into an all-out assault on European cultures. Since being appointed in 2022, Türk has transformed his office. It now issues daily *muezzin* calls for uncontrolled mass migration to the West and the erasure of white cultures. His report should cause Western nations to abandon every U.N. agency that pursues this sick agenda.

The genesis of the colonial reparations movement (and the adjacent slavery reparations movement) that Türk is building on began as a fringe cause among Western Marxists in the 1970s. It was taken up by African nations following the first

major conference on the topic in Lagos in 1990. The U.N. joined the chorus in the 2000s. It mustered political support for a renewed “Big Push” of development aid to Africa (most former colonial Asian nations want nothing to do with this backward agenda). The clamor grew by merging with the “racial justice” movement that erupted in the 2010s, reaching its crescendo on the streets of Minneapolis in 2020. “Behind today’s racial violence, systemic racism and discriminatory policing lies the failure to acknowledge and confront the legacy of the slave trade and colonialism,” Türk’s predecessor said at an “urgent” U.N. meeting at the time.

Colonialism, it seems, is responsible for every bad thing that has ever happened to a brown or black person. “Reparatory justice is about exposing and coming to terms with the truth of our common history, not erasing it, ignoring it or rewriting it,” Türk [remarked](#) about his upcoming report. “Colonialism’s brutal legacy persists even today.” Apparently he is unaware of Turkish colonialism, Chinese colonialism, Arab colonialism, black colonialism, North American indigenous colonialism, or Indonesian colonialism, to name but a few.

As his comment about rewriting history suggests, there is some urgency at the U.N. to get the extortion racket started because the false claims concerning Western colonialism are increasingly being recognized for what they are. No serious scholar can ignore the [reams](#) of rigorous scientific work over the last three decades that have shown colonialism was largely beneficial, especially for Africa. Every canard about colonialism—that is, artificial borders, economic exploitation, political oppression, human rights abuses, cultural erasure, and environmental destruction—is false. For example, the so-called “drain theory” that claims Britain sapped India of its wealth has been debunked so many times by serious economic historians (most [recently](#) by the London School of Economics’s Tirthankar Roy) that its continued resilience in unrevised form can only be a symptom of madness.

There is no small irony in Ghana's foreign minister and the new head of the Commonwealth, Shirley Botchwey, [calling](#) for colonial reparations upon taking office. British rule was sought by the minor groups of the Ghana region in the 1820s to protect them from the vicious, slave-based Asante kingdom. British colonialism then turned the area into the most prosperous and democratic place in West Africa until it was laid waste under post-colonial "Afro-centric" despot Kwame Nkrumah. One of Botchwey's first meetings upon being appointed Commonwealth Secretary-General was with Nkrumah's son, to whom she promised to carry on his anti-colonial foolishness.

In fact, most colonies were an economic drain on the colonizers, which is why they so happily abandoned them to the wiles of post-colonial despots. This was cheered on by the U.N. and other self-styled consciences of the world, especially India. If reparations are owed, they are owed to the colonizers. As for post-colonial horrors, it is the U.N. system that was largely responsible for them. At the very least, it should pony up some apologies for its mad "decolonize" agenda. But having denounced and forcibly ended colonialism, the U.N. today just can't seem to get enough of the lies. By keeping alive the delusional idea of "harmful colonial legacies," it hopes to extract political and economic gains.

Türk also intends to revive the crank "slavery reparations" cause, now used interchangeably with colonialism to rope more Western nations, especially the U.S., into the guilty pen. This is an even more dangerous topic to wade into, for doing so would be to lift the veil on the long-standing intra-African, Arab, Indian Ocean, and indigenous North American slave trades that far exceeded the Atlantic scourge. It would also require some intellectual gymnastics to explain why American blacks, the totemic arch-victims, are wealthier today than the white British, the alleged arch-conspirators of colonialism and slavery.

For good measure, most reparations activists now also throw “climate injustice” and “capitalism injustice” into the hopper as part of the colonial/slavery legacy. This clearly puts the target on the United States, which it seems was the plan all along. Like billboard attorneys, the reparations movement is most interested in who has the deepest pockets. The British group Oxfam [calls](#) President Trump the “crown jewel” of the problems allegedly spawned by the West.

Of course, talk about “truth” and “justice” is rather rich coming from a left-wing cultural establishment that has pooh-pooed such Enlightenment concepts for the last 50 years as the clever ploys of white men. “It’s perhaps one of the ironies of postcolonial studies that, with the sheer focus on discursive formations, power hierarchies, identities, and narratives, the concept of justice has increasingly evaporated,” [noted](#) the Austrian academic Georg Cavallar about the upcoming reparations report. “If it only exists in quotation marks, there is no longer such a thing as colonial injustice.”

Former colonial powers have been paying de facto reparations for half a century in the form of useless and undeserved foreign aid that has largely lined the pockets of corrupt Third World rulers. To the extent that they have succumbed to a misplaced sense of guilt about the ravages visited on these countries by their post-colonial rulers, they have also been stumping up by opening their doors to mass migration.

A U.N. [report](#) in 2019 called for a sweeping transformation of the fabric of Western countries in the name of “reparations for colonialism and slavery,” citing luminaries like Ta-Nehisi Coates. In addition to the usual grubby money asks, it demanded mandatory indoctrination for colonial harms in Western countries, the remaking of public spaces in the West as guilt exhibitions, and the bulldozing of established legal doctrines “to make them fit for the purposes of undoing the legacies of historical racial discrimination and injustice.”

Oxfam, in its colonial reparations report, demanded an end to Western patents and the confiscation of the wealth of all billionaires in the West through new reparations taxes.

This historical debate took on a new, shrill tone when Volker Türk came into office. He began to [talk](#) about “racism and white supremacy” as part of the colonialism/slavery incubus. Non-white female athletes, he [averred](#) in July, face threats “rooted in sexist, racist and colonial narratives.” In March, he said the world must “dismantle entrenched power structures and confront white supremacy.” The same month at a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council, he [warned](#) about “spreading racism in Europe and the US,” as if the problem were an exclusively Western one. Uttering these words in a region with the most horrid racism against blacks and South Asians was rather rich.

Like many European elites, Türk treats white culture as a plague and Western nations as convicted criminals. Apparently he has never heard of caste racism in India, anti-Japanese racism in China, anti-Chinese racism in Southeast Asia, anti-Asian racism in the black community, anti-black racism throughout the Arab world, or anti-white racism everywhere.

Türk promises that his reparations report will “assist states and others in their efforts to advance on this issue.” One group often cited in the U.N. discussions is the U.K.-based Advocacy Team, which issued a Google-based [“research report”](#) in 2023 that demanded debt relief and a financial transactions tax to fund reparations. Its sole citation to substantiate the claim of colonial harms is a reference to drain theory by a Marxist economist, and it highlights the militant Marxist group [Revolutionary Reparations](#) as its guiding light.

U.N. chief António Guterres, meanwhile, is pushing for a permanent African seat on the Security Council as part of the reparations package. This is a key demand of the African Union

which, having begun life by breaking away from the Western-bashing Organization of African Unity in 2002, has now run out of new ideas and returned to the tired old [theme](#) of anti-colonial victimhood.

Indeed, the whole reparations movement can be read as a symptom of the psychological and social involution of black cultures in particular. “Our only job right now is reparations, we have no other job as peoples of African descent,” the Jamaican academic and U.N. advisor Sonjah Stanley [told](#) a Caribbean government conference in September. If the West wanted to make a difference and show “political will and moral courage” as the U.N. [insists](#), it would direct its energies to helping these nosediving cultures to pull out of their suicidal obsession with colonialism/slavery victim narratives, which circulate through the U.N. system (as in the academy) like a bad drug.

Türk may go one step further in the suite of proposed reparations. He has made clear that he views limits on mass migration as another manifestation of white racism and colonialism, and thus subject to “reparative” policies. Decrying new Western controls on migrants and refugees in 2024, he [declared](#), “Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance continue to plague societies, propped up by entrenched power structures, vested interests, institutional inertia and harmful stereotypes, often rooted in legacies of colonialism and slavery.” This is no sudden whim: he is drawing upon a little-noticed but powerful new [argument](#) among activist scholars who see migration rights as the most plausible means of extracting reparations for colonialism. Ultimately, what these ideologues in the academy and the U.N. system [seek](#) is globalist control of all resources in the name of reparations so they can be redistributed to the Third World. Thus, Türk’s [call](#) in a speech in March for “pursuing reparations in its various forms.”

There is little chance, of course, that Western countries will

cave to these demands *tout court*. But reparations activists are nothing if not brilliant institutional strategists. They have achieved many victories under other guises: equity policies for blacks, compensation for alleged colonial victims like those of the Mau Mau counter-insurgency in colonial Kenya, open borders to equalize a world supposedly suffering from the legacies of slavery and colonialism, and much else. Today's racist rhetoric against white Europeans and the attempted erasure of their cultures is just the latest power play to soften up the target.

Volker Türk is the face of everything that has gone wrong in the U.N. system. His reparations report will offer reason enough to defund much of this awful creation.

First published in the [American Mind](#)

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